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A STUDY OF THE OBJECTIVITY OF MATERIALS USED IN CURRENT EVENTS INSTRUCTION IN SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMS.

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THE FIVE CLASSROOM PERIODICALS WITH THE LARGEST CIRCULATION IN THE NEW YORK AREA ARE COMPARED WITH THE THREE BEST SELLING ADULT NEWS PUBLICATIONS, THE BEST SELLING CONSERVATIVE JOURNAL OF OPINION, AND THE BEST SELLING LIBERAL JOURNAL OF OPINION TO DETERMINE IF THE USE OF CLASSROOM PERIODICALS IN HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL SCIENCE COURSES IS JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF THEIR GREATER OBJECTIVITY AND FREEDOM FROM BIAS. A PANEL OF KNOWLEDGEABLE SOCIAL SCIENCE AND HISTORY TEACHER-SCHOLARS WERE ASKED TO RATE AND RANK VARIOUS TREATMENTS OF THE SAME TOPIC IN TERMS OF THE OBJECTIVITY AND CONSERVATISM OF THE PRESENTATION, USING INSTRUMENTS PREPARED BY THE RESEARCHERS. HYPOTHESIS ONE, THE FIVE CLASSROOM PERIODICALS ARE LESS OBJECTIVE THAN THE ADULT PUBLICATIONS, WAS NOT SUPPORTED BY THE DATA. HYPOTHESIS TWO, CLASSROOM PERIODICALS ARE MORE CONSERVATIVE AS MEASURED BY RANKING THEM ON A CONSERVATIVE-LIBERAL CONTINUUM THAN ARE THE ADULT PUBLICATIONS, WAS REJECTED. HYPOTHESIS THREE, CLASSROOM PERIODICALS DO NOT SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVITY, WAS REJECTED. HYPOTHESIS FOUR, EACH OF THE CLASSROOM PERIODICALS IS INCONSISTENT IN TERMS OF ITS CONSERVATISM OR LIBERALITY, WAS SUPPORTED BY THE DATA. (HM)

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A STUDY OF THE OBJECTIVITY OF MATERIALS  
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Cooperative Research Project No. S-261

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## PROBLEM

A number of curriculum study and revision projects are underway in the elementary and secondary school social science and history area.<sup>1</sup> In our view these projects are long overdue; they involve some highly competent scholars; and they have national scope and significance. We believe that they have already had and will continue to have a very real impact on practices in the schools. Further, we perceive certain trends and directions in this activity even though, to be sure, some of the recommendations are contradictory and conflicting. Our analysis of these trends leads us to believe that in the future increased attention will be given to the study of contemporary affairs.

However, even if this prediction turns out to be incorrect, instruction in current events has consumed a significant fraction of the time allotted for the social studies program for many years. For example, California informally suggests that one fifth of the instructional time should be spent in this way.<sup>2</sup> This recommendation is widespread. Ever since publication of the highly influential report of the Committee on the Social Studies of the National Education Association in 1916 there has been a steady growth in the amount of attention given to contemporary matters. This Report centered on the need for informed citizenship, and it argued that the best way to attain this goal was to have children study current economic, social and political problems. This is where the term social studies, with all of its implications was first given national attention, and here was the beginning of the promotion of the idea of a 'Problems of Democracy' course. In short

current events instruction is and has been emphasized for some time and we believe that it will receive even more attention in the near future.

In spite of this emphasis and the fact that we have had a long time for experimentation, there is very little written on how to deal with some of the persistent problems of teaching current affairs. We are thinking of such questions as: How should current events instruction be organized? Into separate courses? Into lessons on a particular day each week? Into separate units of several days each throughout the year? By using the headline approach for a few minutes each day? By following the advice, which usually leads to no instruction in the area at all, "teach current events when it is appropriate to the "regular" content of the course? By teaching history with the topical, flashback, approach? Or, does the approach and organization make any significant difference? What should be the relationship between the content of current events instruction and the traditional disciplines? How should this content be taught -- are there any tricks which are particularly helpful? What instructional materials should be used? Of greatest importance, what should be the goals of current events instruction?

One of the "answers" which has evolved without the benefit of any appreciable amount of research is to rely on the current events classroom periodicals. There are approximately fifteen such publications. They are widely used.<sup>3</sup> We think they are commonly badly used. Our supervisory observations in several parts of the country over the years lead us to believe that all too frequently, these periodicals almost exclusively determine the content, approach and organization of instruction in this area. We

have seen them used week after week in an uncritical way. They are very powerful; yet we know very little about them.

No attempts to critically analyze the content of these publications was found. We carefully reviewed all of the standard library resources available to the researcher on matters of this sort. In addition, we wrote to the publishers of these journals in our search for such a survey.

A brief bibliography of the items which provide some help with our broad questions are listed at the close of this report. But to repeat, we were unable to locate any attempts to analyze the current events publications.

Our study is not a general treatment of how to teach current events, nor is it a complete analysis of the classroom current events periodicals. We hope to work on these matters at a later stage. This project is concerned with only one important aspect of the current events periodicals, objectivity. One of the major justifications given for using these special publications is that they are purported to be free of the biases of adult publications. They are supposed to give the children the unvarnished truth. Now, to be sure, some have argued that even if this contention were true, the publications should not be used; but, for our work here, we will concentrate on the objectivity issue. All of the spokesmen for these periodicals claim that they: are accurate and factual; minimize interpretation, carefully label opinion when it is given; and offer several points of view when a controversial question is raised. Independent proponents of the use of these publications make very similar claims.<sup>4</sup> There seems to be no research evidence that supports these assertions. We think this is a serious lack and a provides a significant first step in researching this area.

We will compare these publications with each other, with adult "news magazines" and with a journal of opinion from the "right" and one from the "left" on the criterion of objectivity.

We have selected the five classroom periodicals with the largest circulation in our geographic area that were written with the senior high school market in mind. This level was chosen largely because the publications are to be compared with adult sources and the differences in vocabulary and sophistication will thus be minimized. The journals prepared for use in elementary and junior high schools offer a whole set of intriguing questions, but they will not be discussed here. The ones we have selected are: American Observer, Our Times, School Weekly of the New York Times, Senior Scholastic and World Week. The American Observer is one of the journals published by the Civic Education Service of Washington, D.C., specifically for grades 11 and 12. Our Times is similarly part of a series. It is for grades 10, 11 and 12, and is published by the American Education Press of Columbus, Ohio. Senior Scholastic and World Week are published by the Scholastic Magazines Company of New York City, the first being for 10th, 11th and 12th graders, and the latter for 8th, 9th and 10th. The coverage of these last two publications overlaps as we shall see, but the circulation figures argued for including them both. School Weekly is a part of the current affairs program published by the New York Times. Subscribing students receive in addition to the School Weekly, issues of the daily Times, Monday through Friday and a variety of special features from time to time. The publishers of the New York Times asked us to emphasize the fact that the School Weekly was only a part of a larger program, because they insisted that one periodical should not provide the sole basis of instruction. No

doubt all the publishers would state their agreement with this view.

It should be noted at this point that all of the publishers of the periodicals included in the study were very cooperative and generous. They gave us permission to use any parts of the publications in any ways which we saw fit.

## OBJECTIVES

The specific hypotheses examined in this study were:

1. The five periodicals included in the study that are for use in senior high school current events instruction are less objective than the best selling adult "news publications" (Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report). Further, the classroom periodicals are less objective than the best selling "conservative" "journal of opinion" (National Review and National Review Bulletin),<sup>5</sup> or than the best selling "liberal" (New Republic) "journal of opinion."<sup>6</sup>
2. The classroom periodicals included in this study are significantly more conservative as measured on a conservative-liberal continuum than the three "news" magazines and the "journals of opinion" used for comparison.
3. The classroom periodicals do not significantly differ from each other in terms of objectivity.
4. Each of the classroom periodicals is inconsistent in terms of its conservatism or liberality when its treatments are compared in three areas of controversy: U.S. foreign policy (the landing of U.S. troops in the Dominican Republic); domestic politics (National Elections of 1964); and domestic economics (the 1964 tax cut).

## PROCEDURE

A panel of knowledgeable teacher-scholars in the social sciences and history were selected. They were asked to rate and then rank various treatments of the same topic in terms of the objectivity and conservatism of the presentation. They used instruments prepared by us. Copies of them are found in Appendix A of this report.

A first step was to give some kind of meaning to 'objectivity.' We came to believe that its components are: accuracy, relevance, inclusiveness, balance, consistency, documentation, clarity and lack of dogmatism. The judges were asked to rate the periodicals in their area of specialization using the following questions:

1. Are the facts which are presented accurate?
2. Are the most appropriate or most relevant facts presented - those most necessary for understanding?
3. Are ill-defined, emotionally loaded terms avoided?
4. Are interpretative remarks and suggestions appropriately labeled and/or qualified?
5. Are statements requiring documentation properly handled?
6. Is the writer (and/or the illustrator) consistent?
7. Does the writer (and/or the illustrator) face the controversial aspects of the topic in a straight forward and balanced way?
8. Are minor items made subordinate to more significant facts and ideas?
9. Are the graphics (maps, tables, charts, cartoons, illustrations, etc.) appropriate? Do they properly relate to printed matter?

Obviously, obtaining precision and complete agreement on any one of these nine characteristics of objectivity is difficult to achieve. It may well be impossible. That is, relevance or balance for one man will be imbalance and irrelevance for another. Even accuracy or consistency presents very difficult problems applied to content as complex and recent as the topics included in this study. We make no claim to have developed a tight definition for the term, nor, did we wish to attempt this philosophical task. We simply believe that a panel of independent research and teaching scholars who carefully ask the questions stated above of each of the journals will provide a better test of objectivity than we have had before.

We chose to ignore completely the problem of clarifying the meaning of 'conservative' or 'liberal.' The reader will note from instrument 3 and the letter of explanation to the judges found in the Appendix B that we merely asked them to use their own conceptions of the term. This action is justified on the grounds that the judges would apply the same meaning of the term to each of the publications reviewed and that if they identified any differences between the periodicals it would be of interest.

The judges were chosen on the basis of their particular teaching and research competence and interest in the subject matter of the topics selected. For example, those asked to rate the national elections of 1964 were teachers of courses in the political process or those who emphasized the political aspects of history. All judges were faculty members of the social sciences and history departments from Cornell University or the Ithaca secondary schools. Four judges (two public school teachers and two college professors) were asked to rate and rank each topic. This means that there were four judges for each of three topics or a total of twelve. It seemed to us that

while there would be some value in having more judges for each topic, that it was more important to have a few judges who were very well informed on the matter in question.

The researchers recognize the problem introduced by the fact that the judges have personal biases. All men do. However, we have considerable confidence in the judgment of these colleagues, and, furthermore, we believe, to repeat, that if the children's publications were judged to be in any way significantly different on the criterion of objectivity from adult publications that this in itself would be of interest. That is, the same biases would probably influence the evaluation of the adult periodicals, and if significant differences were identified, this would be useful to know regardless of the type or reason for the differences.

As we said, circulation data were used to select the periodicals for study, because this seemed to be a reasonable way to limit the scope of the study and limits were essential. (It might be useful to replicate this study using other journals.)

To summarize, the topics, raters and time periods selected were:

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Time Limit</u>	<u>Raters</u>
U.S. Troops Land in the Dominican Republic	From date of entry, April 28, 1965, until two weeks later	Mr. John Bozzone, area studies teacher in Ithaca, New York
		Professor Tom E. Davis Director, Latin American Studies Cornell University
		Mrs. Anne Hickcox History teacher in Ithaca, New York
		Professor James O. Morris, Director of International Activities in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Time Limit*</u>	<u>Raters</u>
1964 Tax Cut	Two weeks before and two weeks after February 26, 1964	Robert E. Doherty Professor of Industrial and Labor Relations Cornell University
		Alfred E. Kahn Professor of Economics Cornell University
		Mr. Kasimir Hipolit Economics teacher in Ithaca, New York
		Mr. Byron Unsworth History teacher in Ithaca, New York
Election of 1964	Two weeks following November 10, 1964	Alan A. Altshuler, Professor of Government Cornell University
		Curtis Pfaff Teacher of history and Chairman of the social studies faculty in Ithaca High School Ithaca, New York
		Donald L. Robinson Instructor of Government Cornell University
		Samuel G. Warren History teacher in Ithaca, New York

\*Time limit refers to publication dates, so that two weeks later means two publications after the event.

The dependent variables in the study were:

1. Objectivity as measured by the mean rating on the items of Instrument #1 as found in the Appendix A.
2. Overall objectivity as measured by the rank of the periodical as given in Instrument #2. (See Appendix A.)

3. Overall conservatism as measured by the rank of the periodical as given in Instrument #3. (See Appendix A.)

Separate analyses were made for each of the three dependent variables; overall objectivity ranking, overall conservative ranking, and mean rating on the nine aspects of objectivity.

To test the possibility of a significant interaction between topics and journal on each of the dependent variables, a balanced factorial design was used.<sup>7</sup> The main effect will be topic (d.f. = 2), Journal (d.f. = 9), and raters within topic (d.f. = 6). Topic and raters were to be considered as having random effects; journal, a fixed effect. A significant interaction was not hypothesized.

The above design will yield an appropriate error term needed for a multiple comparison test (Duncan New Multiple Range Test) of the journal means. A comparison of these means represents the central focus of the study. Of interest is a comparison among the journals of different categories as well as a comparison among the 5 journals within the classroom periodical category. It was hypothesized that the means of the classroom periodicals on the objectivity measures are significantly less than the means of the other journals under consideration, and that the classroom journals would be rated significantly more conservative than the three adult "news periodicals" and the "liberal" adult opinion periodical.

As we have seen, three broad areas of life were selected: domestic politics, foreign affairs, and domestic economics. This selection was made to provide a partial answer to whether one of the publications was objective on some kinds of topics and biased on others.

All graphics and printed materials on these three topics were reproduced in an effort to hide the identity of the publications. This was a failure in many cases. Our judges recognized the distinctive styles of some of the periodicals. We became to realize that removing David Lawrence's name, for example, from an editorial in U.S. News and World Report did not conceal his identity in the slightest. Furthermore, the judges had read most of these journals on the particular topic of interest to them at an earlier time. As we have said, they were experts. Again, we are reduced to a dependency on the judgment and good faith of these scholars. We are satisfied with this condition.

This investigation was not directly concerned with the inter-rater reliability. However, we will comment on this matter in the findings. Further study of the validity of each of the 12 ratings as an indicator of objectivity is intended by the principal investigator - but such analysis is not a part of this particular study.

The study began on June 1, 1965, and continued until August 31, 1966. An approximate time table follows:

<u>Completion Date</u>	<u>Activity</u>
November 30, 1965 .....	Topics and raters selected; materials prepared for rating
May 31, 1966 .....	Collection of data
August 31, 1966 .....	Analysis of data and submission of this Report

## FINDINGS

Hypothesis 1 -- The first hypothesis was that the group of classroom periodicals would be less objective than the adult journals. This hypothesis is not supported by the data. There was no significant difference between the classroom periodicals and the "news journals." In fact, the three periodicals rated most objective were in the classroom category. However, it should be noted that two classroom periodicals, American Observer and Our Times were rated 7th and 9th respectively.

Table I shows the total mean objectivity rating for each of the ten publications when all topics and ratings are combined. The periodicals are listed here in order of their objectivity on the basis of the results of the mean rating on instrument #1:

1. School Weekly of the New York Times - most objective  
(hereafter called School Weekly)
2. Senior Scholastic
3. World Week
4. Time
5. U.S. News and World Report
6. Newsweek
7. American Observer
8. New Republic
9. Our Times
10. National Review - least objective

Among the other relationships indicated in Table I, the following seem noteworthy:

1. A significant difference exists between National Review and the other publications. That is, this journal was judged to be significantly less objective than each of the others.

**Table I**  
Objectivity as Measured by the Mean Rating on All Items and All Topics - Instrument #1

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Means	S.W.	Sen.S.	W.W.	Time	U.S.N.	&W.R.	News.	Am.O.	New R.	O.T.	Nat.R.
	1.37	1.50	1.76	1.99	2.10	2.29	2.38	2.44	2.89	3.36	Significant Ranges*
<u>School Weekly</u>	1.37	.13	.39	.62	.73	.92	1.01	1.07	1.52	1.99	R2 = .32
<u>Senior Scholastic</u>	1.50	.26	.49	.60	.79	.88	.94	1.39	1.86	R3 = .33	
<u>World Week</u>	1.76	.23	.34	.53	.62	.68	1.13	1.60	R4 = .34		
<u>Time</u>	1.99			.11	.30	.39	.45	.90	1.37	R5 = .35	
<u>U.S. News &amp; World Report</u>	2.10				.19	.28	.31	.79	1.26	R6 = .36	
<u>Newsweek</u>	2.29					.09	.15	.60	1.07	RR7 = .36	
<u>American Observer</u>	2.38						.06	.51	.98	R8 = .37	
<u>New Republic</u>	2.44							.45	.92	R9 = .37	
<u>Our Times</u>	2.89							.47	R10= .37		
	S.W.	Sen.S.	W.W.	Time	U.S.N.	&W.R.	News.	Am.O.	New R.	O.T.	Nat.R.

Any two treatment means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

Any two treatment means underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

\*Duncan's New Multiple Range Test applied to the differences between the 10 treatment means.

2. Likewise, Our Times was significantly different from the other periodicals. Also, in terms of this first purpose of the study it should be noted that it was rated lower in objectivity than a publication frankly labeled, "journal of opinion." The publication received a "poor" score on several factors, but, according to our raters the major fault was on the criterion of the adequacy of coverage.
3. The adult "news publications" were not significantly different from each other.
4. The two most objective publications, School Weekly and Senior Scholastic were not significantly different from each other.

Table II gives the objectivity ratings on the topic, national elections of 1964. It reports the mean rating of the four judges on topic #1 of instrument #1. As in the case of the general data just reported, School Weekly, World Week and Senior Scholastic were judged to be the most objective. There were not significant differences among the three. The three "news periodicals" came next and they were insignificantly different from each other. They did shift rankings.

Our Times was significantly different from all of the other publications and was least objective of the ten. Again the judges reported inadequate and superficial coverage. It should be remembered that we are looking at the ratings on the 1964 national elections, certainly an enormously important matter in any current events class at the time. It also should be noted that this classroom periodical was rated lower than both the "journals of opinion" on this topic.

American Observer was rated significantly less objective than the "news journals."

Table II

Objectivity as Measured by the Mean Rating on All Items of Topic 1, 1964 National Elections - Instrument #1

S.W.	W.W.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Shortest Significant Ranges*
Means		S.W.	W.W.	Sen.S.	News.	U.S.N.	& W.R.	Time	New R.	Am.O.	Nat.R.	0.T.
		1.14	1.33	1.36	1.58	1.58	1.61	2.37	2.56	3.03	3.56	
<u>School Weekly</u>		1.14	.19	.22	.44	.44	.47	1.23	1.42	1.89	2.42	R2 = .30
<u>World Week</u>		1.33	.03	.25	.25	.25	.28	1.04	1.23	1.70	2.23	R3 = .32
<u>Senior Scholastic</u>		1.36		.22	.22	.22	.25	1.01	1.20	1.67	2.20	R4 = .33
<u>Newsweek</u>		1.58		0	0	0	.03	.79	.98	1.45	1.98	R5 = .34
<u>U.S. News &amp; World Report</u>		1.58					.03	.79	.98	1.45	1.98	R6 = .34
<u>Time</u>		1.61						.76	.95	1.42	1.95	R7 = .34
<u>New Republic</u>		2.37								.19	.66	1.19
<u>American Observer</u>		2.56									.47	1.00
<u>National Review</u>		3.03									.53	
		S.W.	W.W.	Sen.S.	News.	U.S.N.	& W.R.	Time	New R.	Am.O.	Nat.R.	0.T.

Any two treatment means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

Any two treatment means underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

\*Duncan's New Multiple Range Test applied to the differences between the 10 treatment means.

Additional findings on Table II seem to speak for themselves.

The objectivity of the periodicals on the 1964 tax cut, as measured by the mean rating on the items in Instrument #1, topic 2, is found in Table III. These ratings were made by the four judges selected on the basis of their knowledge of domestic economic matters.

Senior Scholastic was rated significantly more objective than the remaining nine periodicals. This is the only topic on which School Weekly did not have the most objective rating. Following Senior Scholastic were two other classroom periodicals, Our Times and School Weekly. These two were found to be significantly more objective than the remaining seven periodicals. This represents a striking shift in the rating for Our Times, since it was rated ninth and tenth in the previously reported data.

It is interesting to note that Our Times was running a special series on taxation at the time of the 1964 cut. This fact seems to account for its significantly higher rating on this topic,

Two adult "news magazines," Time and U.S. News and World Report, and another classroom periodical, World Week were rated as next most objective by our four judges. This marks a sharp drop in the rating of World Week. The differences among the three were insignificant, but they were significantly more objective than New Republic, American Observer, Newsweek, and National Review. The ranking of Newsweek was significantly lower on this topic than on the other two subjects. Our guess is that this is a result of the writing of the economist-journalist, Henry Hazlitt. In any case, whatever the reason, this was the one example in our study of having one of the three "news journals" rated significantly lower than both of its competitors. National Review was the only journal rated significantly less objective than Newsweek on this topic.

Table III

Objectivity as Measured by the Mean Rating on All Items of Topic 2, 1964 Tax Cut =

Means											Shortest Significant Ranges*
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Sen.S.	O.T.	S.W.	Time	U.S.N. &W.R.	W.W.	New R.	Am.O.	News.	Nat.R.		
1.17	1.40	.04	.23	.27	.64	.68	.60	1.15	1.19	1.91	R2 = .23
<u>Senior Scholastic</u>	1.17										
<u>Our Times</u>	1.40										
<u>School Weekly</u>	1.44										
<u>Time</u>	1.81										
<u>U.S. News &amp; World Report</u>	1.85										
<u>World Week</u>	1.97										
<u>New Republic</u>	2.32										
<u>American Observer</u>	2.46										
<u>Newsweek</u>	3.08										
Sen.S.	O.T.	S.W.	Time	U.S.N. &W.R.	W.W.	New R.	Am.O.	News.	Nat.R.		

Any two treatment means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

Any two means underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

\*Duncan's New Multiple Range Test applied to the differences between 10 treatment means.

The rating of American Observer slipped to its lowest point on this topic. This classroom periodical was rated number 8 on the tax cut issue.

Table IV presents the findings on the subject of landing U.S. troops in the Dominican Republic. As an interesting aside, we wish to report that the judges were much more critical of all journals on this topic than on the others. This may be a result, of course, of a chance grouping of judges who had higher standards for objectivity or who were simply "tougher graders" than the others. Then, too, it could mean that the treatment of foreign affairs matters in all of these periodicals is less critical or objective than is treatment of domestic subjects in the same journals. These charges/ have been frequently made and a good many political leaders have spoken of the need to present a "united front" to the world or a "non-partisan" foreign policy. This study, obviously, does not provide any meaningful evidence on this point. This is just one of many issues on which the study seems to leave more unsaid than it says.

School Weekly was rated significantly more objective than all other publications. Senior Scholastic and World Week, as was said earlier, are published by the same firm. On this topic they had identical coverage. They were rated as next most objective. Again, to suggest an intriguing side road, one wonders why, if this repetition is common, the company publishes two periodicals and advertises one for an older audience than the other?

Newsweek followed the three classroom periodicals and was significantly more objective than both of the other "news periodicals." Again, this is the only "news journal" to depart significantly from the others in this category. American Observer is rated significantly more objective than

Table IV

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Means	S.W. <u>1.53</u>	W.W. <u>1.97</u>	Sen.S. <u>1.97</u>	News. <u>2.19</u>	Am.O. <u>2.22</u>	Time <u>2.56</u>	New R. <u>2.61</u>	U.S.N. <u>&amp;W.R. 2.86</u>	Nat.R. <u>3.28</u>	O.T. <u>3.72</u>	Shortest Significant Ranges*
<u>School Weekly</u>	1.53	.44	.44	.66	.69	1.03	1.08	1.33	1.75	2.19	R2 = .34
<u>World Week</u>	1.97	0	.22	.25	.59	.64	.89	1.31	1.75	R3 = .35	
<u>Senior Scholastic</u>	1.97	.22	.25	.59	.64	.89	1.31	1.75	R4 = .36		
<u>Newsweek</u>	2.19	.03	.37	.42	.67	1.09	1.53	R5 = .37			
<u>American Observer</u>	2.22	.34	.39	.64	1.06	1.50	R6 = .38				
<u>Time</u>		2.56			.05	.30	.72	1.16	R7 = .38		
<u>New Republic</u>	2.61				.25	.67	1.11	R8 = .38			
<u>U.S. News &amp; World Report</u>		2.86				.42	.84	R9 = .39			
<u>National Review</u>	3.28						.44	R10 = .39			
	S.W.	W.W.	Sen.S.	News.	Am.O.	Time	New R.	U.S.N.	&W.R.	Nat.R.	O.T.

Any two treatment means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

Any two treatment means underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

\*Duncan's New Multiple Range Test applied to the differences between the 10 treatment means.

two of the "news journals", Time and U.S. News and World Report. The differences between Time, U.S. News and World Report and New Republic are significant, however, the later journal of opinion is rated more objective than U.S. News and World Report. Our Times was rated significantly least objective of all the publications, and one judge wanted to eliminate it from the study all together because the coverage was so inadequate. As we will see, this view was shared by four other judges when they were asked to give this publication an overall rank on instrument #2. Perhaps they are correct, but inclusiveness or adequacy of coverage is deemed to be an important criterion of objectivity.

Now we will turn to the second instrument in the study. This instrument was designed to obtain a ranking on the overall objectivity of the ten periodicals. The findings are tabulated in Table V.

All twelve judges were asked to rank the periodicals on this scale even though each of them had only reviewed the journals on the basis of one of the three topics. That is, we had three groups of four judges each reporting.

National Review was significantly the least objective of the periodicals at the .05 level of confidence. School Weekly and Senior Scholastic were ranked as most objective of the periodicals. They both were significantly different from all periodicals except for the relationship between Senior Scholastic and its companion publication, World Week.

The validity of the rankings of American Observer and Our Time can be seriously questioned since five of the twelve judges refused to rank them because of the "inadequacy of their coverage." Inclusiveness was one of the variables the judges were asked to consider when ranking the publications,

Table V

Overall Objectivity as Measured by the Rank of the Periodicals in Instrument #2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Means	S.W. 2.25	Sen.S. 3.08	W.W. 3.33	Am.O. 4.83	Time 5.75	O.T. 5.75	News. 6.33	U.S.N. 6.92	New R. 7.25	Nat.R. 9.50	Shortest Significant Ranges*
<u>School Weekly</u>	2.25	.83	1.08	2.58	3.50	3.50	4.07	4.67	5.00	7.25	R2 = 1.61
<u>Senior Scholastic</u>	3.08	.25	1.75	2.67	2.67	3.25	3.84	4.17	6.42	R3 = 1.70	
<u>World Week</u>	3.33			1.50	2.42	2.42	3.00	3.59	3.92	6.17	R4 = 1.75
<u>American Observer</u> **	4.83				.92	.92	1.50	2.09	2.42	4.67	R5 = 1.79
<u>Time</u>		5.75				0.00	.58	1.17	1.50	3.75	R6 = 1.82
<u>Our Times</u> **		5.75					.58	1.17	1.50	3.75	R7 = 1.85
<u>Newsweek</u>			6.33					.59	.92	3.17	R8 = 1.87
<u>U.S. News &amp; World Report</u>				6.92					.33	2.58	R9 = 1.89
<u>New Republic</u>					7.25					2.25	R10= 1.90

\*\* Since 5 of 12 judges refused to rank these (inadequate coverage) little confidence is suggested.

Any two treatment means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

Any two treatment means underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

\*Duncan's New Multiple Range Test applied to the differences between the 10 treatment means.

but five of them declined to rank the publication low exclusively on these grounds. While the data for these publications are reported on Table V, for the information of the reader, it is advised that little confidence should be placed in these particular findings.

No significant differences were found in the mean rankings of the "news journals." New Republic was rated less objective than the "news journals" (Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report) but the differences were not statistically significant. As we have seen, New Republic was considered to be significantly more objective than National Review.

If American Observer and Our Times are removed, then the pattern of rankings is consistent with the overall ratings previously reported in Table I. That is, we find three classroom journals, School Weekly, Senior Scholastic and World Week, listed as most objective; the three "news journals" are ranked in the middle; and finally the two journals of opinion are rated as least objective. Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report have reversed order, from the overall ratings, but the differences were insignificant as reported on both Table I and Table V.

Hypothesis 2 -- The second hypothesis of the study was that the classroom periodicals are more conservative as measured by ranking them on a conservative-liberal continuum than the adult publications. We were aware, of course, that using the "journal of opinion" that represents a conservative point of view, National Review, would present some special difficulties. However, the judges were asked to rank all of the publications, "on a continuum from right to left, most conservative to most liberal or progressive." They were told that it was permissible to place two or more

publications at the same rank. We were trying to ascertain whether or not the publications were conservative quite apart from their objectivity ranking.

Table VI provides the findings on instrument #3. National Review was regarded to be most conservative as would be expected, but the relationship was insignificantly different from the next most conservative journal, U.S. News and World Report.

Time, Newsweek, Our Times and American Observer were ranked in this order as the next most conservative publications. The differences among these publications were not significant. Three classroom periodicals, World Week, School Weekly, and Senior Scholastic came next and the least conservative publication was New Republic.

This means that the hypothesis that the classroom periodicals were more conservative than the adult periodicals is rejected. Except for New Republic the least conservative publications were all five classroom journals.

As was indicated earlier, inter-reliability among the judges was not a concern of this study, and, therefore, no tests of significance on this matter were used. By observation, however, the mean rankings and ratings seemed largely consistent.

Table VII is offered as an example of the generally close agreement of the judges.

Table VI

Overall Conservatism as Measured by the Rank of the Periodicals in Instrument #3

<u>Means</u>	<u>Nat.R.</u>	<u>U.S.N.</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>News.</u>	<u>O.T.</u>	<u>Am.O.</u>	<u>W.W.</u>	<u>S.W.</u>	<u>Sen.S.</u>	<u>New R.</u>	<u>Shortest Significant Ranges*</u>
	<u>&amp;W.R.</u>	<u>2.42</u>	<u>4.63</u>	<u>5.21</u>	<u>5.42</u>	<u>5.71</u>	<u>6.50</u>	<u>6.96</u>	<u>7.00</u>	<u>9.75</u>	
<u>National Review</u>	1.42	1.00	3.21	3.79	4.00	4.29	5.08	5.54	5.58	8.33	R2 = 1.22
<u>U.S. News &amp; World Report</u>	2.42	2.21	2.79	3.00	3.29	4.08	4.54	4.58	7.33	R3 = 1.28	
<u>Time</u>	4.63		.58	.79	1.08	1.87	2.33	2.37	5.12	R4 = 1.32	
<u>Newsweek</u>	5.21			.21	.50	1.29	1.75	1.79	4.54	R5 = 1.36	
<u>Our Times</u>	5.42				.29	1.08	1.54	1.58	4.33	R6 = 1.38	25
<u>American Observer</u>	5.71					.79	1.25	1.29	4.04	R7 = 1.40	
<u>World Week</u>	6.50						.46	.50	3.25	R8 = 1.41	
<u>School Weekly</u>	6.96							.04	2.79	R9 = 1.43	
<u>Senior Scholastic</u>	7.00								2.75	R10 = 1.44	
		<u>U.S.N.</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>News.</u>	<u>O.T.</u>	<u>Am.O.</u>	<u>W.W.</u>	<u>S.W.</u>	<u>Sen.S.</u>	<u>New R.</u>	
		<u>Nat.R.</u>	<u>&amp;W.R.</u>								
		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

Any two treatment means not underscored by the same line are significantly different at the .05 level of confidence.

Any two treatment means underscored by the same line are not significantly different.

\*Duncan's New Multiple Range Test applied to the differences between the 10 treatment means.

Table VII

Mean Rankings of Each Judge on Instrument #3 - Conservatism

Judge	Our Times	World Week	American Observer	U.S.				U.S. News and Review				New Republic			
				Senior Scholastic	School Weekly	News- week	World Report	Time	National Review	Time	National Review	Dominican Republic	Review	Time	National Review
<u>U.S. Troops Land in the Dominican Republic</u>															
1	6.5	6.5	3.5	6.5	6.5	9.0	4.5	1.5	3.5	1.5	10.0				
2	4.5	7.5	6.0	7.5	9.0	8.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	10.0					
3	2.0	6.5	5.0	6.5	9.0	4.0	3.0	4.0	1.0	10.0					
4	7.0	5.5	8.0	5.5	9.0	4.0	1.5	3.0	1.5	10.0					
<u>1964 Tax Cut</u>															
5	4.5	7.0	4.5	9.0	7.0	1.0	2.0	7.0	3.0	10.0					
6	4.0	7.0	10.0	7.0	7.0	1.0	3.0	7.0	2.0	7.0					
7	6.5	6.5	6.5	9.0	6.5	2.0	4.0	3.0	1.0	10.0					
8	5.5	5.5	5.5	9.0	5.5	1.0	3.0	8.0	2.0	10.0					
<u>National Elections 1964</u>															
9	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	2.0	6.0	1.0	10.0					
10	9.0	6.0	3.0	4.0	7.0	8.0	2.0	5.0	1.0	10.0					
11	4.5	6.5	4.5	6.5	8.0	9.0	2.0	3.0	1.0	10.0					
12	5.0	7.5	6.0	7.5	3.0	9.0	3.0	3.0	1.0	10.0					

Hypotheses 3 and 4 -- Hypothesis number 3 - the classroom periodicals do not significantly differ from each other in terms of objectivity - is rejected. The evidence given in Tables I through IV indicate that some of the classroom periodicals differ significantly from some of the others on each specific topic and in the general rating. Generally, but not with complete consistency, School Weekly, Senior Scholastic and World Week were rated significantly more objective than American Observer and Our Times.

The data support the fourth hypothesis which stated that each of the classroom periodicals is inconsistent in terms of its conservatism or liberalism when its treatments in different areas of controversy are compared. That is, the classroom journals were not consistently conservative to the same degree on all topics. Table VIII records the factorial analysis.

Table VIII

Conservative-Liberal Ranking - Instrument #3

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	Test of Significance
Within	16,300.03	90	181.11	
Journal	60,625.00	9	6736.11	37.19*
Topic/Journal	15,825	18	879.17	4.85**

\*p .01 (Average ranking some journals receive was different from average ranking others received.)

\*\*p .01 (Topic and journal interaction--If a journal received high ranking on one topic, it doesn't necessarily receive a high ranking on another topic--Journals were inconsistent across topics.)

## CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS

The comments which follow are partially derived from the specific findings previously reported, but they are also partially based on our admittedly subjective review of the periodicals and the comments of the raters. As the judges were forced to make the difficult decisions involved in placing statements in rigid categories when they didn't seem to fit, their frustrations led to very interesting reactions, indeed. Be warned, then, this section goes beyond our data, and this fact should be borne in mind while reading it.

1. The classroom periodicals as a group are neither less objective nor more conservative than the adult publications included in this study. Certain classroom periodicals (School Weekly, Senior Scholastic and World Week) were generally found to be more objective than the adult periodicals individually or as a group. All five of the classroom periodicals were ranked less conservative than the "news journals" or than the journal of opinion on the "right," National Review. Therefore, it seems to follow that if a teacher wants to use a weekly current events publication, and if he considers these two factors to be significant, then he might well encourage the use of one or more of these classroom periodicals as at least a partial source of information. Our first choice would be School Weekly.

2. Our Times and the American Observer were not regarded to be as objective as the other three classroom periodicals in the study or as some of the adult journals on some topics. However, these two periodicals contained articles on specific topics in each issue which generally received

favorable reactions from the judges. It may be that these publications are not satisfactory as general news sources, but can be effectively used for topics that they happen to cover.

3. As any reader of this report would guess, none of the classroom publications, or the adult periodicals for that matter, were completely consistent in terms of objectivity or conservatism. That is, they differed from topic to topic. This fact leads us to make three very unsophisticated but important recommendations: One, teachers need to be very well informed in order to detect adequately the biases in sources of information regarding current, highly controversial topics. Being so informed is going to take a great deal of time and effort. Teachers we have known in large numbers are either unable or unwilling to make this effort. They need help. In fact, in supervising teachers it has been our experience to find that a major weakness is knowledge of contemporary affairs. The second recommendation is that teachers should use a variety of sources. This is too obvious to belabor, yet based on practices observed it must not be so obvious to a lot of people. The final recommendation related to this point is that the high school library should contain a wide collection of printed and other news sources. Again, our observation is that far too many schools stop with subscriptions to the "news periodicals" included in this study and to one or more of these classroom periodicals.

4. As we have said, the classroom periodicals are not consistently "good" or "bad." They differ sharply from topic to topic. However, here are some of our general reactions which seem to be true more often than not. The quality of writing varies, but it is frequently dull and colorless. Usually the facts which are presented are accurate, but the inadequacy of

coverage is striking. The illustrations, charts and maps are frequently misleading and since the text is usually so brief, the harmful impact of these graphics may be particularly dangerous. There are very few signed articles of opinion, labelled interpretations, or analytical letters from readers. Documentation is almost non-existent. There is marked tendency in our view to avoid the most controversial and therefore often the most important aspects of a situation. To be candid, much of what we have said is equally true of the "news periodicals."

5. Senior Scholastic and World Week contain advertisements aimed specifically at the teen age market. This is not meant to imply that this is a reason for not using the publications, but it does suggest some extra cautions for the teacher. The school should not become a party to the "child buyer" problem without having its eyes wide open.

6. Many questions of importance concerning the use of the classroom periodicals were not considered in this study. Teachers should be aware of issues we have in mind.

We are now convinced that these classroom journals try to be objective, even neutral, but if we want future citizens to be critical consumers of the news media, then is the stance of the classroom periodicals an argument for not using them?

Should the school be a place in which children learn to use effectively the publications which will be available to them as adults? If the answer is yes, then should the publications prepared exclusively for schools be used, particularly in situations in which the children are old enough and bright enough to use adult sources?

Does the use of classroom periodicals encourage the isolated, non-integrated one-day-a-week treatment of current events? If so, is this a good thing? Most of the writers on current events teaching say that it is not.

Does the use of classroom periodicals lead to a kind of uncritical, accepting attitude of all news sources?

Does the use of these periodicals help to make the study of contemporary affairs a dull and passive exercise? Or, if this happens, is it the result of bad teaching and not related to anything inherent in the publications themselves?

Does the use of the classroom periodicals with its national scope lead to the elimination of the study of important local and regional current topics - topics which may have more significance and motivational value than broader ones?

Does these periodicals become a "crutch" for lazy teachers? If they weren't used or weren't available would teachers be forced to be more resourceful and imaginative in their planning?

Do the use of these periodicals give their editors too much power in determining what is important or what is worthy of study?

7. There is very little of real help written for teachers in this area. There is almost no research. This puts a tremendous responsibility on individual teachers to make as sound decision as possible based on little evidence. As a start in dealing with this problem teachers might become thoroughly familiar with the items reported in the brief bibliography enclosed in this report. But they will have to do more. They will have to do some experimentation and writing in this field and encourage others to do likewise.

8. As we have said, we don't know precisely what objectivity is and so we clearly don't know how to measure it. Serious work on this subject ought to be undertaken. But, we will never solve the problem of objectivity. News sources must necessarily be more or less subjective. The heart of the matter is that teachers must be on the lookout for bias. We recommend that the best preparation for teachers in this regard is to have them be students of the methods of inquiry from the social sciences and history. That is, we believe every teacher should study the problems of research methodology in at least one discipline. This should be an absolute requirement in the preparation of teachers. Then, we believe, that every secondary school social studies classroom should devote time to a critical study of the news media.

NOTES

1. See the April 1965 issue of Social Education.
2. Report of the State Central Committee on Social Studies to the California State Curriculum Commission, California State Department of Education, 1961, p. 10.
3. Senior Scholastic is reported to have a circulation of 1.3 million.
4. For example, see Lewenstein, M. R., Teaching Social Studies in Junior and Senior High Schools (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), p. 453.
5. These two periodicals are published on alternate weeks. We will group them under the title National Review.
6. Circulation figures for these publications were taken from Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory 65-66, Vol. 2, Arts Humanities Business and Social Sciences. Bowker Company.
7. Admittedly, the normality assumption will not be satisfied for the two overall indices. Resulting probabilities will be interpreted with this in mind.

**APPENDIX A - INSTRUMENTS USED IN THE STUDY**

Instrument #1 Check the most appropriate space for each of the publications given to you.

Rater's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Rating	Publication No.	1 Yes, nearly always or always	2 Yes, a majority of the time	3 No, a majority of the time	4 No, nearly never, or never	5 Insufficient date for a judgment
<p>1. Are the facts which are presented accurate?</p> <p>2. Are the most appropriate or most relevant facts presented - those most necessary for understanding?</p> <p>3. Are ill-defined, emotionally loaded terms avoided?</p> <p>4. Are interpretative remarks and suggestions appropriately labeled and/or qualified?</p> <p>5. Are statements requiring documentation properly handled?</p> <p>6. Is the writer (and/or the illustrator) consistent?</p> <p>7. Does the writer (and/or the illustrator) face the controversial aspects of the topic in a straight forward and balanced way?</p> <p>8. Are minor items made subordinate to more significant facts and ideas?</p> <p>9. Are the graphics (maps, tables, charts, cartoons, illustrations, etc.) appropriate? Do they properly relate to printed matter?</p>						

Instrument # 2

Ranker's Name

Date of Ranking

You have been asked to read nine or ten publications on the same topic. Please rank them 1-9 or 10 with 1 being the most objective and 10 the least objective. Consider accuracy, relevance, balance, consistency, documentation, clarity of language, lack of dogmatism, inclusiveness and any other variables you deem appropriate in your judgment. You may want to place more than one publication at the same point, and this is permissible.

Publication Number	Rank
	1 (Most objective)
	2
	3
	4
	5
	6
	7
	8
	9
10 (Least objective)	

Instrument #3

Ranker's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Ranking \_\_\_\_\_

One final task - please rank the nine or ten publications on a continuum from "right to left." (1 most "conservative" - 9 or 10 most "liberal" or "progressive"). You may want to place more than one publication at the same point and this is permissible.

Publication Number \_\_\_\_\_

Rank \_\_\_\_\_

1 (Most "conservative")

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10 (Least "conservative")

APPENDIX B  
SAMPLE LETTER TO JUDGES WITH ABSTRACT

25 October 1965

Professor Tom Davis  
Economics Department  
Goldwin Smith  
Campus

Dear Tom:

The abstracted proposal which is attached was modestly funded by the U.S. Office of Education. I am wondering whether or not you would be willing to serve as a judge. Your topic would be U.S. troops landed in the Dominican Republic, 1964.

We would like you to read the total coverage of ten different unidentifiable lay publications on this topic for a period of three weeks after the event. We will, of course, supply these materials. Then, we would like you to rate and rank these materials using three separate, very simple, one page instruments. We are simply asking for your considered judgment. I would guess that a maximum of a half day of work would be involved. We will be able to pay you a modest honorarium of \$50 for your services. The materials will probably be ready by the end of November. We will need your reactions by mid-January at the latest.

One final word to avoid misunderstanding--I seek to be able to make some statements about the objectivity of these classroom periodicals on the basis of this little study. For more important questions, such as whether or not these papers ought to be used at all, or whether, in fact, we ought to teach topics of this sort in secondary schools, are being examined, but the project described herein is only indirectly related to the "big questions."

I hope you will accept this assignment.

Sincerely,

W. Lowe  
Associate Professor

APPENDIX B  
(Continued)A STUDY OF THE OBJECTIVITY OF MATERIALS USED IN CURRENT EVENTS INSTRUCTION  
IN SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOMSAbstract of the Research Proposal

This study attempts to determine the objectivity of the classroom periodicals which are used in senior high school social studies classrooms. All of the classroom periodicals used in the study make the claim that they are accurate and factual; that they minimize interpretation; that they carefully label opinion when it is given; and that they offer several points of view on controversial questions. Independent proponents of the use of these publications make similar claims. In short, they claim objectivity. This study attempts to evaluate this claim for those publications prepared for senior high school use. If a lack of objectivity is uncovered, then the study hopes to identify the nature of the distortion, e.g., whether these periodicals "lean to the right or the left."

The five of these current events periodicals with the greatest circulation will be compared with five adult publications on three topics from differing aspects of contemporary affairs, e.g., domestic politics, foreign affairs and internal economics. The five adult publications will be comprised of three adult "news periodicals" and two adult "opinion periodicals" one representing the "right" and one the "left." Objectivity is perceived to be concerned with accuracy, relevance, inclusiveness, balance, consistency, documentation, clarity, and lack of dogmatism. Twelve judges who are scholars and teachers of the three topics from the secondary schools of Ithaca, New York, and from Cornell University will examine the ten unidentified treatments of the same topic and will employ an objectivity questionnaire, an objectivity ranking and a conservative-liberal ranking instrument.

The results of this study should provide useful information for those interested in pre-service education of teachers of the social studies, in-service training of teachers, improvement and evaluation of teaching materials, identification of the components of objectivity, and the improvement of the instructional process particularly for teachers of secondary school social studies.

Research Director: William T. Lowe, Associate Professor, School of Education  
Research Assistant: Gordon Purrington

APPENDIX C  
SAMPLE LETTER TO PUBLISHER

Dear Publisher X:

I work with social studies teachers, both experienced and inexperienced. As you would guess, a perennial topic for discussion with these people is the broad issue of how to teach current affairs. A more specific question is what instructional materials should be used. I have always recommended the use of one or more of the specially prepared current events periodicals such as the one you publish in addition to other resources. Recently, I have had my advice challenged on several occasions on the grounds that some of these publications are biased and slanted. Since I have not been a regular reader of some of these periodicals for three or four years, these challenges have stimulated some research interests. I am wondering what your reaction would be to these interests.

I would like to select approximately six or eight of the largest selling classroom current events publications and a few "journals of opinion" as a validity check. Then, several controversial topics from a variety of fields, e.g., domestic politics, U.S. economic policy, and foreign affairs, would be identified. All articles and graphics on these subjects would be collected from each publication September 63 - January 64 and reproduced on plain sheets of paper so that the specific publication could not be identified. Then a panel of independent judges composed of professionals (college and secondary school teachers of the social sciences and history who have a particular knowledge of one of the areas selected) would be asked to judge the accuracy and objectivity of the various accounts. I may also try to get at the interest and appeal of the presentations using children as the judges, but this is not really central to my task.

Does this study interest your firm? Do you know of any recent published research of a similar type? What would it cost me personally (this would be unsponsored research) to obtain copies of all issues of your publications of interest to me in this regard from September to January? (See below for your specific publications(s)). Are there dimensions not suggested herein which you believe are vital to my interests? Would you be willing to permit me to reproduce sections of your publication for this purpose?

I am anxious to hear from you. Your publication(s) which interests me is:

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

William T. Lowe  
Associate Professor

WTL:vw

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## SUMMARY

**Title:** A Study of the Objectivity of Materials  
Used in Current Events Instruction in  
Secondary School Social Studies Classrooms

**Investigators:** William T. Lowe and Gordon Purrington

**Institution:** School of Education, Cornell University,  
Ithaca, New York

**Project Number:** S-261

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Addendum

## BACKGROUND

For forty years there has been a steady growth in the amount of emphasis given to current events instruction in social studies classrooms. Curriculum projects underway at the present time seem to continue and expand this trend. Periodicals prepared especially for use in the schools tend to dominate instruction in this area. They determine to a large degree the content and approach to teaching in this area. In spite of the emphasis given to current events instruction and the importance of these classroom periodicals, there is almost no research which attempts to analyze them.

A major justification given for the use of the classroom periodicals is that they are more objective, freer of bias, than adult publications. Actually, there seems to be no research evidence to document this assertion.

## OBJECTIVES

The specific hypotheses examined in this study were:

1. The five periodicals included in the study that are for use in senior high school current events instruction are less objective than the best selling adult "news publications" (Time, Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report). Further, the classroom periodicals are less objective than the best selling "conservative" "journal of opinion" (National Review and National Review Bulletin), or than the best selling "liberal" (New Republic) "journal of opinion".
2. The classroom periodicals included in this study are significantly more conservative as measured on a conservative-liberal continuum than the three "news" magazines and the "journals of opinion" used for comparison.
3. The classroom periodicals do not significantly differ from each other in terms of objectivity.

4. Each of the classroom periodicals is inconsistent in terms of its conservatism or liberality when its treatments are compared in three areas of controversy: U. S. foreign policy (the landing of U. S. troops in the Dominican Republic); domestic politics (National Elections of 1964); and domestic economics (the 1964 tax cut).

#### PROCEDURE

A panel of knowledgeable teacher-scholars in the social sciences and history were selected. They were asked to rate and then rank various treatments of the same topic in terms of the objectivity and conservatism of the presentation. They used instruments prepared by us.

A first step was to give some kind of meaning to 'objectivity.' We came to believe that its components are: accuracy, relevance, inclusiveness, balance, consistency, documentation, clarity and lack of dogmatism. The judges were asked to rate the periodicals in their area of specialization using the following questions:

1. Are the facts which are presented accurate?
2. Are the most appropriate or most relevant facts presented - those most necessary for understanding?
3. Are ill-defined, emotionally loaded terms avoided?
4. Are interpretative remarks and suggestions appropriately labeled and/or qualified?
5. Are statements requiring documentation properly handled?
6. Is the writer (and/or the illustrator) consistent?

7. Does the writer (and/or the illustrator) face the controversial aspects of the topic in a straight-forward and balanced way?
8. Are minor items made subordinate to more significant facts and ideas?
9. Are the graphics (maps, tables, charts, cartoons, illustrations, etc.) appropriate? Do they properly relate to printed matter?

Obviously, obtaining precision and complete agreement on any one of these nine characteristics of objectivity is difficult to achieve. It may well be impossible. That is, relevance or balance for one man will be imbalance and irrelevance for another. Even accuracy or consistency presents very difficult problems applied to content as complex and recent as the topics included in this study. We make no claim to have developed a tight definition for the term, nor, did we wish to attempt this philosophical task. We simply believe that a panel of independent research and teaching scholars who carefully ask the questions stated above of each of the journals will provide a meaningful test.

We chose to ignore completely the problem of clarifying the meaning of 'conservative' or 'liberal.' We merely asked the judges to use their own conceptions of the term. This action is justified on the grounds that the judges would apply the same meaning of the term to each of the publications reviewed and that if they identified any differences between the periodicals it would be of interest.

The judges were chosen on the basis of their particular teaching and research competence and interest in the subject matter of the topics selected. All judges were faculty members of the social sciences and history department from Cornell University or the Ithaca secondary schools. Four judges (two public school teachers

and two college professors) were asked to rate and rank each topic. This means that there were four judges for each of three topics or a total of twelve.

The researchers recognize the problem introduced by the fact that the judges have personal biases. All men do. However, we have considerable confidence in the judgement of these colleagues, and, furthermore, we believe, to repeat, that if the children's publications were judged to be in any way significantly different on the criteria of objectivity and conservatism from adult publications that this in itself would be of interest. That is, the same biases would probably influence the evaluation of the adult periodicals, and if significant differences were identified, this would be useful to know regardless of the type or reason for the differences.

The dependent variables in the study were:

1. Objectivity as measured by the mean rating on the 9 items of instrument #1 as found in the previously stated questions.
2. Overall objectivity as measured by the rank of the periodical.
3. Overall conservatism as measured by the rank of the periodical as given on a conservative-liberal continuum.

Separate analyses were made for each of the three dependent variables; overall objectivity ranking, overall conservative ranking, and mean rating on the nine aspects of objectivity.

To test the possibility of a significant interaction between topics and journal on each of the dependent variables, a balanced factorial design was used.<sup>7</sup> The main effect will be topic (d. f.=2) Journal (d. f. =9), and raters within topic (d. f. =6). Topic and raters were to be considered as having random effects; journal, a fixed effect. A significant interaction was not hypothesized.

The above design will yield an appropriate error term needed for a multiple comparison test (Duncan New Multiple Range Test) of the journal means. A comparison of these means represents the central focus of the study. Of interest is a comparison among the journals of different categories as well as a comparison among the 5 journals within the classroom periodical category. It was hypothesized that the means of the classroom periodicals on the objectivity measures are significantly less than the means of the other journals under consideration, and that the classroom journals would be rated significantly more conservative than the three adult "news periodicals" and the "liberal" adult opinion periodical.

As we have seen, three broad areas of life were selected: domestic politics, foreign affairs, and domestic economics. This selection was made to provide a partial answer to whether one of the publications was objective on some kinds of topics and biased on others.

## RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 -- The first hypothesis was that the group of classroom periodicals would be less objective than the adult journals. This hypothesis is not supported by the data. There was no significant difference between the classroom periodicals and the "news journals." In fact, the three periodicals rated most objective were in the classroom category. However, it should be noted that two classroom periodicals, American Observer and Our Times were rated 7th and 9th respectively.

The periodicals are listed here in order of their objectivity on the basis of the results of the mean rating on instrument #1:

1. School Weekly of the New York Times - most objective  
(hereinafter called School Weekly)
2. Senior Scholastic
3. World Week
4. Time
5. U. S. News and World Report
6. Newsweek
7. American Observer
8. New Republic
9. Our Times
10. National Review - least objective

The following additional findings seem noteworthy:

1. A significant difference exists between National Review and the other publications. That is, this journal was judged to be significantly less objective than each of the others.

2. Likewise, Our Times was significantly different from the other periodicals. Also, in terms of this first purpose of the study it should be noted that it was rated lower in objectivity than a publication frankly labeled, "journal of opinion." (The publication received poor score on several factors, but, according to our raters the major fault was on the criterion of the adequacy of coverage.)

3. The adult "news publications" were not significantly different from each other.

4. The two most objective publications, School Weekly and Senior Scholastic were not significantly different from each other.

When the ten periodicals were compared on the basis of the three topics separately, we found that some journals shifted their positions in the ratings. That is, some periodicals were significantly more objective on some topics than on others.

All graphics and printed materials on these three topics were reproduced in an unsuccessful effort to hide the identity of the publications. Our judges recognized the distinctive styles of some of the periodicals. Again, we are reduced to a dependency on the judgment and good faith of these scholars. We are satisfied with this condition.

This investigation was not directly concerned with the inter-rater reliability. Further study of the validity of each of the 12 ratings as an indicator of objectivity is intended by the principal investigator - but such analysis is not a part of this particular study.

Instrument #2 was designed to obtain a ranking on the overall objectivity of the ten periodicals.

All twelve judges were asked to rank the periodicals on this scale even though each of them had only reviewed the journals on one of the three topics. That is, we had three groups of four judges each reporting.

National Review was significantly the least objective of the periodicals at the .05 level of confidence. School Weekly and Senior Scholastic were ranked as most objective of the periodicals. They both were significantly different from all periodicals except for the relationship between Senior Scholastic and its companion publication, World Week.

The validity of the rankings of American Observer and Our Times can be seriously questioned since five of the twelve judges refused to rank them because of the "inadequacy of their coverage." Inclusiveness was one of the variables the judges were asked to consider when ranking the publications, but five of them declined to rank the publication low exclusively on these grounds. It is advised that little confidence should be placed in these particular findings.

No significant differences were found in the mean rankings of the "news journals." New Republic was rated less objective than the "news journals" (Time, Newsweek and U. S. News and World Report) but the differences were not statistically significant. As we have seen, New Republic was considered to be significantly more objective than National Review.

If American Observer and Our Times are removed, then the pattern of rankings is consistent with the overall ratings previously reported in Table I. That is, we find three classroom journals, School Weekly, Senior Scholastic and World Week, listed as most objective; the three "news journals" are ranked in the middle; and finally the two journals of opinion are rated as least objective.

Newsweek and U. S. News and World Report have reversed order, from the overall ratings, but the differences were insignificant as report on both Table I and Table V.

Hypothesis 2 -- The second hypothesis of the study was that the classroom periodicals are more conservative as measured by ranking them on a conservative-liberal continuum than the adult publications. The judges were asked to rank all of the publications, "on a continuum from right to left, most conservative to most liberal or progressive." They were told that it was permissible to place two or more publications at the same rank. We were trying to ascertain whether or not the publications were conservative quite apart from their objectivity ranking.

National Review was regarded to be most conservative as would be expected, but the relationship was insignificantly different from the next most conservative journal, U. S. News and World Report.

Time, Newsweek, Our Times and American Observer were ranked in this order as the next most conservative publications. The differences among these publications were not significant. Three classroom periodicals, World Week, School Weekly, and Senior Scholastic came next and the least conservative publication was New Republic.

This means that the hypothesis that the classroom periodicals were more conservative than the adult periodicals is rejected. Except for New Republic the least conservative publications were all five classroom journals.

As we indicated earlier, inter-reliability among the judges was not a concern of this study, and, therefore, no tests of significance on this matter were used. By observations, however, the mean rankings and ratings seemed largely consistent.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 -- Hypothesis number 3 - the classroom periodicals do not significantly differ from each other in terms of objectivity - is rejected. The evidence indicates that some of the classroom periodicals differ significantly from some of the others on each specific topic and in the general rating. Generally, but not with complete consistency, School Weekly, Senior Scholastic and World Week were rated significantly more objective than American Observer and Our Times.

The data support the fourth hypothesis which stated that each of the classroom periodicals is inconsistent in terms of its conservatism or liberality when its treatments in different areas of controversy are compared. That is, the classroom journals were not consistently conservative to the same degree on all topics.

### CONCLUSIONS

The comments which follow are partially derived from the specific findings previously reported, but they are also partially based on our admittedly subjective review of the periodicals and the comments of the raters. As the judges were forced to make the difficult decisions involved in placing statements in rigid categories when they didn't seem to fit, their frustrations led to very interesting reactions, indeed. Be warned, then, this section goes beyond our data, and this fact should be borne in mind while reading it.

1. The classroom periodicals as a group are neither less objective nor more conservative than the adult publications included in this study. Certain classroom periodicals (School Weekly, Senior Scholastic and World Week) were generally found to be more objective than the adult periodicals individually or as a group. All five of the classroom periodicals were ranked less conservative than the

"news journals" or than the journal of opinion on the "right," National Review.

Therefore, it seems to follow that if a teacher wants to use a weekly current events publication, and if he considers these two factors to be significant, then he might well encourage the use of one or more of these classroom periodicals as at least a partial source of information. Our first choice would be School Weekly.

2. Our Times and the American Observer were not regarded to be as objective as the other three classroom periodicals in the study or as some of the adult journals on some topics. However, these two periodicals contained articles on specific topics in each issue which generally received favorable reactions from the judges. It may be that these publications are not satisfactory as general news sources, but can be effectively used for topics that they happen to cover.

3. As the reader would guess, none of the classroom publications, or the adult periodicals for that matter, were completely consistent in terms of objectivity or conservatism. That is, they differed from topic to topic. This fact leads us to make three very unsophisticated but important recommendations: One, teachers need to be very well informed in order to detect adequately the biases in sources of information regarding current, highly controversial topics. Being so informed is going to take a great deal of time and effort. Teachers we have known in large numbers are either unable or unwilling to make this effort. They need help. In fact, in supervising teachers it has been our experience to find that a major weakness is knowledge of contemporary affairs. The second recommendation is that teachers should use a variety of sources. This is too obvious to belabor, yet based on practices observed it must not be so obvious to a lot of people.

The final recommendation related to this point is that the high school library should contain a wide collection of printed and other news sources. Again, our observation is that far too many schools stop with subscriptions to the "news periodicals" included in this study and to one or more of these classroom periodicals.

4. As we have said, the classroom periodicals are not consistently "good" or "bad." They differ sharply from topic to topic. However, here are some of our general reactions which seem to be true more often than not. The quality of writing varies, but it is frequently dull and colorless. Usually the facts which are presented are accurate, but the inadequacy of coverage is striking. The illustrations, charts and maps are frequently misleading and since the text is usually so brief, the harmful impact of these graphics may be particularly dangerous. There are very few signed articles of opinion, labelled interpretations, or analytical letters from readers. Documentation is almost non-existent. There is marked tendency in our view to avoid the most controversial and, therefore, often the most important aspects of a situation. To be candid, much of what we have said is equally true of the "news periodicals."

5. Senior Scholastic and World Week contain advertisements aimed specifically at the teen age market. This is not meant to imply that this is a reason for not using the publications, but it does suggest some extra cautions for the teacher. The school should not become a party to the "child buyer" problem without having its eyes wide open.

6. Many questions of importance concerning the use of the classroom periodicals were not considered in this study. Teachers should be aware of

issues we have in mind.

We are now convinced that these classroom journals try to be objective, even neutral, but if we want future citizens to be critical consumers of the news media, then is the stance of the classroom periodicals an argument for not using them?

Should the school be a place in which children learn to use effectively the publications which will be available to them as adults? If the answer is yes, then should the publications prepared exclusively for schools be used, particularly in situations in which the children are old enough and bright enough to use adult sources?

Does the use of classroom periodicals encourage the isolated, non-integrated one-day-a-week treatment of current events? If so, is this a good thing? Most of the writers on current events teaching say that it is not.

Does the use of classroom periodicals lead to a kind of uncritical, accepting attitude of all news sources?

Does the use of these periodicals help to make the study of contemporary affairs a dull and passive exercise? Or, if this happens, is it the result of bad teaching and not related to anything inherent in the publications themselves?

Does the use of the classroom periodicals with its national scope lead to the elimination of the study of important local and regional current topics - topics which may have more significance and motivational value than broader ones?

Do these periodicals become a "crutch" for lazy teachers? If they weren't used or weren't available would teachers be forced to be more resourceful and imaginative in their planning?

Does the use of these periodicals give their editors too much power in determining what is important or what is worthy of study?

7. There is very little of real help written for teachers in this area.

There is almost no research. This puts a tremendous responsibility on individual teachers to make as sound decisions as possible based on little evidence. They will have to do some experimentation and writing in this field and encourage others to do likewise.

8. As we have said, we don't know precisely what objectivity is and so we clearly don't know how to measure it. Serious work on this subject ought to be undertaken. But, we will never solve the problem of objectivity.

News sources must necessarily be more or less subjective. The heart of the matter is that teachers must be on the lookout for bias. We recommend that the best preparation for teachers in this regard is to have them be students of the methods of inquiry from the social sciences and history. That is, we believe every teacher should study the problems of research methodology in at least one discipline. This should be an absolute requirement in the preparation of teachers. Then, we believe, that every secondary school social studies classroom should devote time to a critical study of the news media.

BIBLIOGRAPHY There are 19 references listed in the final report.

PUBLICATIONS None to date